Historical Fiction Assignment

**Due:** Tuesday, December 13 (by 11 a.m.), when our “final” ends…

**Goals:** To incorporate both research about a historical figure and your own creativity into a story that is clearly written, well structured in terms of both writing conventions and plot, makes an interesting point and is entertaining. Most importantly, it should be informative – teaching the reader something about the subject of the story in much the same way that we have learned about Turing partially through historical fiction.

**Assignment:** Select a historical figure whom you admire and/or know something about and write a short story with that person as a primary character. The story should use a *narrative* style, which means that it should tell a story, and reveal a moral or lesson in the telling. You may choose to use multiple speakers/voices in the telling of the story.

The portrayal of the person whom you choose should be true to what is known historically about that person. They should not do or say anything that is wildly out of character, unless your story goes on to explain why they diverged from their known behavior. Some research should come into play in the service of this requirement. Likewise, if you place your person into a real historical setting, the details of that setting/situation/event/etc. should be accurate.

You may choose from any number of literary conventions to make your story compelling and interesting. For example, you can place your person into a real historical situation at which they were actually not present. You can place them in an “alternate history” situation, in which an event or decision has gone differently than it did in real history. (Germany won WWII, for example.) You can use a science fiction device (time travel, for example) to place your character in a different historical era, or alternatively leave them in their own era but provide them with technology from a different one.

You have significant latitude in the construction of your plot. But the plot itself must be well structured in much the same way your research papers have been. That is, there should be a thesis – a point or objective of the story that you are telling. As you know from the OWL reference, there are many ways to introduce your thesis, or otherwise make it clear to the reader. You may select the best way to do this, but the thesis must be present and the overall organization/plot must be clear, with clear transitions.

Though research is obviously not a primary objective of this assignment, *preparation and organization* are required. For ideas regarding both preparation and organization consult the OWL closely. Do the same as you review your own paragraph structure, sentence structure, grammar, etc. With regard to the educational information about your subject, *footnotes would be beneficial*, though a bibliography is not required. That is, you should annotate facts used about your subject in footnotes so the reader knows what is historical and what is your invention.

**Options:** This is the second of your “presentational” papers for the semester. It has the same length requirement as your recent research papers – 1500-200 words in length (about 5-6 pages). There is no explicit assignment to submit a draft or to discuss your draft(s) with me, but you are welcome to do so. Just contact me for an appointment to sit down and read your paper together.